

EXHIBIT 7

The Washington Post

Democracy Dies in Darkness

At President Trump's hotel in New York, revenue went up this spring — thanks to a visit from big-spending Saudis

By **David A. Fahrenthold** and **Jonathan O'Connell**

August 3, 2018 at 12:00 p.m. CDT

The general manager of the Trump International Hotel in Manhattan had a rare bit of good news to report to investors this spring: After two years of decline, revenue from room rentals went up 13 percent in the first three months of 2018.

What caused the uptick at President Trump's flagship hotel in New York? One major factor: "a last-minute visit to New York by the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia," wrote general manager Prince A. Sanders in a May 15 letter, which was obtained by The Washington Post.

Neither Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman nor members of the royal family stayed at Trump's hotel, Sanders said: He said the Trump hotel didn't have suites big enough to accommodate them. But "due to our close industry relationships," he wrote, "we were able to accommodate many of the accompanying travelers."

The previously unreported letter — describing a five-day stay in March that was enough to boost the hotel's revenue for the entire quarter — shows how little is known about the business that the president's company does with foreign officials.

Such transactions have fueled criticism that Trump is reaping revenue from foreign governments, even as he controls U.S. foreign policy toward those countries. Trump's company has disclosed few details about the business it does with foreign customers, saying it already reveals more than is required.

Neither the Trump Organization nor the Saudi Embassy answered questions about whether the Saudi government paid for anyone's stay at the hotel. Sanders did not respond to requests for comment.

For now, just a handful of foreign government clients at Trump properties have been publicly identified through media reports and statements from foreign officials.

But a broader list could eventually come out.

Last week, a federal judge in Maryland gave the go-ahead to a lawsuit alleging that by accepting government business at his properties, Trump is violating the Constitution's "emoluments clauses" — dusty 18th-century measures meant to prevent presidents from putting their private bank accounts ahead of the public interest.

If it stands, the ruling could force the company to provide new details about its relationships with foreign governments, states and even federal agencies.

“This was how the Framers protected against corruption,” said Maryland Attorney General Brian Frosh (D), who filed the landmark suit along with D.C. Attorney General Karl A. Racine (D). They said the Constitution’s authors wanted answers to emoluments questions to be public. “They wanted to make sure the president would put the country above himself.”

On Friday, after this story was published online, New York Attorney General Barbara Underwood announced that she was already conducting a separate investigation asking if Trump had violated the emoluments clause at his businesses in New York.

The Justice Department, which is representing Trump in his official capacity, has argued that the Founding Fathers meant only to stop presidents from accepting gifts from foreign governments — not to keep presidents from conducting private business.

Frosh has said he believes the case could end up eventually before the Supreme Court. So far, neither the Justice Department nor Trump’s private attorney has said if they will appeal the decision.

The White House did not respond to requests for comment.

Trump said he has given up day-to-day control over his businesses. But he still owns them and can withdraw money from them.

From the start of Trump’s administration, his company has said it sees nothing wrong with continuing to do business with foreign states.

“The renting of a hotel room from one of the Trump businesses is not correlated to President Trump’s performance of the duties of the Office of President,” Bobby R. Burchfield, a Republican attorney whom the Trump Organization hired as an outside ethics adviser, wrote in a recent article in the Texas Review of Law & Politics.

Under pressure, the Trump Organization agreed last year to donate profits from foreign government clients to the U.S. Treasury. This year, it announced the amount of the donation for 2017: \$151,470.

But it declined to say which foreign governments those profits came from, or how much they had spent in total.

Officials with Trump’s D.C. hotel — the property that is the subject of the emoluments suit — have told The Post that they are not actively courting foreign business, but they acknowledged they also are not turning it away.

The Embassy of Kuwait, for instance, has held its national day celebration twice at Trump’s hotel in downtown Washington.

This year, the Embassy of the Philippines also became a Trump customer, holding its Philippine independence day party in the Trump hotel’s ballroom. Trump has had warm relations with Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, even as human rights groups have condemned Duterte for a crackdown on drug users that has left thousands dead.

“Having it at a hotel that happens to have [Trump’s] name . . . it’s a statement,” Jose Manuel Romualdez, the Philippine ambassador to the United States, told Philippine TV station ABS-CBN during the event. “It’s a statement that we have a good relationship with this president.” He said the embassy chose Trump’s hotel as a venue, but private donors actually paid.

Also, last year Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak was spotted at Trump’s D.C. hotel, along with a sizable ~~entourage~~ during an official trip to Washington (Najib was later ousted in an election)

And the Saudi government spent \$270,000 at Trump's D.C. hotel last year, according to filings by a lobbying firm acting on the Saudis' behalf. Press reports indicated that the money paid for hotel rooms, food and parking for U.S. veterans groups brought to the District to lobby against a bill the Saudi government opposed.

Beyond that list, there have been other events at Trump properties that had some connection to foreign governments — but the source of payment is unclear.

Earlier this year, Trump's Mar-a-Lago Club in Florida hosted part of a "Polish American Leadership Summit," which was organized in part by Polish government ministries, according to the summit's website. When The Post inquired about whether the Polish government had paid to rent the room, an embassy spokeswoman referred questions to the organizers of the event, who declined to comment.

In the case of the Saudi visit to New York earlier this year, a spokeswoman for the Saudi Embassy said that none of Mohammed's official traveling delegation stayed at the Trump International Hotel in New York. But she said the Saudi Embassy did not know if the Saudi government had paid for anyone else's stay at the hotel during the crown prince's visit.

The crown prince visited New York from March 26 to 30, as part of a longer, multicity American tour. Press reports indicate that many of his official delegation stayed at the Plaza Hotel — a New York landmark that Trump once owned, but sold in 1995.

Although Trump's hotel in Washington has prospered during his presidency, some other properties — farther from the seat of power — have struggled. In New York, for instance, Trump's hotel in SoHo lost business, and last year its owners cut ties with the Trump Organization.

Trump International Hotel in Manhattan — the one remaining Trump-branded hotel in New York — saw room revenue drop from 2015 to 2017, according to figures obtained by The Post. So the Saudi visit was a welcome boost.

The D.C. and Maryland attorneys general hope to use their emoluments lawsuit as a kind of legal pry bar, cracking open the Trump Organization's secrecy about its customers.

In last week's ruling, federal Judge Peter J. Messitte sided with them in a long-running debate about what the Founding Fathers really meant when they banned presidents from taking "emoluments" from foreign states.

Messitte agreed that, in the modern context, this covered not just outright gifts from foreign states but also regular business transactions — "even those involving services given at fair market value."

Now — unless the ruling is overturned on appeal — that could allow the plaintiffs to ask the Trump Organization for a list of those transactions. Their search would be limited to the Trump hotel in Washington, but the plaintiffs are clearly hoping that their victory will inspire other suits aimed at Trump's properties in places such as New York.

The case may also bring new scrutiny on the Trump Organization's business relationship with the U.S. government, which owns the building that houses Trump's D.C. hotel. Before he became president, Trump won a long-term lease to operate a hotel there.

Democrats in Congress say this relationship is now a separate kind of prohibited emolument — an unfair benefit given to Trump by his own government.

A clause in the lease says that “No . . . elected official of the Government of the United States . . . shall be admitted to any share or part” of the hotel’s ownership.

But, after Trump was in office, the General Services Administration ruled that he could still keep the lease.

That decision is now being probed by two independent inquiries, from the Government Accountability Office and the GSA’s inspector general. Messitte could allow the plaintiffs to seek information about the lease.

Georgetown University law professor John Mikhail, who has been studying the emoluments clauses, said these inquiries together could shatter the veil of privacy that Trump’s company has maintained — even while its owner is in the White House.

“He has very constantly refused to conform to well-established norms about conflict of interest and corruption and the appearance of corruption,” Mikhail said. “At some point in time, he may be told by a court: ‘You lose. You have to comply.’”

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BluebirdVA 2 years ago

What a joke! It is a clear case of the conflict of interest. Do me a favor and I do a favor to you, the trash governments of the world! While Trump gains, the tax payers money is all wasted.

Like 👍 1 Link ↗ Report 🚩



dduggerbiocepts

2 years ago

Case 1:20-cv-06025-PAE Document 33-4 Filed 01/13/21 Page 6 of 25

Of course Trump is not accepting a salary - laundered profits he and his family have already recovered many times the money by continuing to secretly monetize his Office as President and the White House. Only an accomplice or an idiot would fail to see the absurd violation of the emollients clause of the Constitution - by failing to have completely open books. There is no way a President any can continue to benefit from his businesses without totally open books to be sure he isn't using said business as a political influence cash machine. We've lost our democracy - whether it was the Clinton's or Trump monetizing their Office - the damage is done. Now the influence of US President's office is open for business to the highest bidders.

The facts that Trumps finance are still secret only make it look like this was part of Trump's grand plan to sack the Office of the President all along. This a level of corruption that the Constitution and its framers never believed possible - and in conjunction with a equally corrupted and self-interest 1st Congress - that will not hold this rogue criminal President accountable to the laws and provisions of our Constitution.

Like Link Report



Rnsr4America

2 years ago

You just admitted to the nefarious purpose of the lawsuit!! "The D.C. and Maryland attorneys general hope to use their emoluments lawsuit as a kind of legal pry bar, cracking open the Trump Organization's secrecy about its customers." Let that sink in!! Using the law corruptly for what it wasn't intended for is Public Corruption. Hope this article helps to shut that down.

Like Link Report



Rnsr4America

2 years ago

Who cares!!! He's already donating his salary and any such profits!! Why is this paper so obsessed with negative Trump news? Americans are only viewing this outside of your DC bubble and proof Trump is an outsider hated by those in DC who have a narcissist sense of ownership to WTP's House. You know I heard they may move the White House Staff/President completely out of DC because of the sickness there! Grooming generations of "lol-Bohemians" who think they can steal and subvert appoint their lineage into government. DC has proven so sick they truly believe their own lies. We have a President who would of course have decades of relationship's in his business dealings. Only the left can make that look like a bad thing and someone sponging off WTP their whole life, like Obama/Clintons look like the good guys. If it wasn't so sick, it would be

funny. On and the pedophiles who need the borders open so their victims are not sent back so they can put them in the real cages of sex trafficking. Each day your hair is on fire only proves how corrupt these entities have become. Shame on you that don't knock off the bias and start acting like Americans who respect their fellow Americans right to elect and enjoy the President of their duly elected choosing. The SCAM isn't even partly hidden, the games are only working to the advantage of President Trump. So as much as wish you would stop your daily attacks, it's actually helping to expose the corruptions within DC sooner. Trump was prepared for the likes of activist posing as journalist because of the Patriots who have turned on you all. Don't be surprised if your own hatred and corruptions is the very thing that turns on you and takes away your freedom. The names are known of each player and their part. Happy Days in America are truly on their way. Soon the 4% in DC will grow and overtake the sicko's on the left. WTP took back our WhiteHouse.

Like  Link  Report 



Helena Handbasquet 2 years ago

-Trump is reaping revenue from foreign governments, even as he controls U.S. foreign policy toward those countries.

-Trump is violating the Constitution's "emoluments clauses"- meant to prevent presidents from putting their private bank accounts ahead of the public interest.

-From the start of Trump's administration, his company has said it sees nothing wrong with continuing to do business with foreign states.

Add to this the thousands of dollars in revenue the government pays him for accomodation for security (and the security, itself) and golf cart rentals, greens fees, etc. plus the advertising that Trump realizes by continually sojourning at his own properties rather than Camp David.

How is *any* of this not violating the "emoluments clauses"? How is *any* of this okay?

The. Worst. President. Ever.

Like  4 Link  Report 



gcorsentino 2 years ago

Why isn't congress investigating this instead of Hillary Clinton? Why isn't the

Sessions and the DOJ investigating this and the Washington Hotel, instead of Hillary Clinton??????? What is wrong with the check and balance of the branch of government that we count on for this????????? A good investigative reporter can only so much if we have an impotent congress.

Like  3 Link  Report 



Rnsr4America 2 years ago

Is this a joke? Because the winning party dictates the investigations. I know for DEMS that is hard to understand since in DC the belief is they maintain control regardless of whether a Republican or DEM is President, but that is false. So they should be investigating Clinton and the entire Cabal, including the unconstitutional appointment of Mueller to try to subvert the WILL of WTP who elected him. The Klan went too far this time, the plan was not even a good one, and its falling apart each day. Better get your papers in order, soon, Americans will see the rise of the Patriots in the Intelligence who have been singing like the choir to save America. So proud.

Like  Link  Report 



StarLawrence 2 years ago

I am no money laundering expert, but isn't staying in his hotels a special way to say thanks for everything?

Like  7 Link  Report 



gcorsentino 2 years ago

Makes you wonder, doesn't it?

Like  3 Link  Report 



Cylam 2 years ago

"his company has said it sees nothing wrong with continuing to do business with foreign states." ... or evil dictators, or Russian handlers or fine racists or abusers of women and children or convicted criminals or anyone with two rubles to rub together.

Like  5 Link  Report 



Kmon227 2 years ago



I remember a time when Presidents divested their personal interests so they could do their job without outside personal influence. Welcome to Trumpistan.

Like 9 Link Report



Atreus 2 years ago

Tax returns now!

Like 11 Link Report



Rnsr4America 2 years ago

Maddow gave you his tax return already. He pays them too, oh, and he uses every single loophole just like any other business owner would. Seriously the obsession is alarming. Wouldn't it make more sense to support the President and the American people for good to come to all of us? The hatred is sad that the left wasn't taught how to lose with grace.

Like Link Report

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EXHIBIT 8

The Washington Post

Democracy Dies in Darkness

At Trump's big-city hotels, business dropped as his political star rose, internal documents show

By **David A. Fahrenthold**, **Jonathan O'Connell** and **Morgan Krakow**

Oct. 4, 2018 at 9:00 a.m. CDT

CHICAGO — Ten years ago, retired electrician Dave Roberts invested \$650,000 in Donald Trump. Roberts bought a single room in Trump's hotel on the Chicago River, then waited for his share of the Trump profit stream.

"Everything he touches turns to gold," Roberts remembered being told.

But the gold wore off, starting in 2016. Fewer guests checked in. Revenue dropped. Roberts estimated that his property value decreased by half, as the real-estate market was flooded with unsold Trump hotel rooms.

"I don't even like walking past the building" now, he said. "I can't even look at it."

As a private company, the Trump Organization says little about its financial ups and downs. But The Washington Post obtained details from two of President Trump's landmark properties — his luxury hotels in Chicago and Manhattan — from small-time investors such as Roberts, who get details that the public does not.

Those investors — and internal documents they provided — showed that revenue at both properties dropped noticeably as Trump's political career took off. The decreases have stirred tensions in the buildings and left many investors worried that the Trump brand may be curdling in the liberal cities where Trump built much of his empire.

In New York, documents show that the ownership board at Trump's hotel considered the stunning idea of removing the Trump name from the hotel the president still calls his "flagship." The idea stalled. One board member, who spoke in favor of keeping the Trump name, was later nominated by Trump to a celebrity-studded presidential council on fitness.

For the small-time investors — who bought individual hotel rooms, under an unusual arrangement that allowed Trump to offload financial risks onto others — the downturn has brought a bitter sense that they're suffering for the political rise of a figure who is now loathed in their communities.

"There's a lot of people who have nothing to do with him, that are being injured," said Howard Finkelstein, an investor in Trump's New York hotel. "We're the ones that are paying the price for his ridiculous ego. There's no reason to have that name on there."

Between 2015 and 2017, revenue from room rentals at the New York hotel declined 14 percent after adjusting for inflation, according to quarterly statements the Trump Organization provided to unit owners.

At Trump's hotel in Chicago, a document investors saw last week showed a similar drop-off. Bookings fell 8 percent from 2015 to 2016, and this year's figures are still lower than the pace in 2016.

At both hotels, the Trump Organization told investors that it did have some good news: In recent months, their losses had been cushioned, partly by new customers from overseas. Both hotels noted an influx of visitors from Saudi Arabia.

Eric Trump — the president’s son, who now runs the Trump Organization with his brother Donald Jr. — said this “has been an incredible year” for the Trump hotel brand. Across all Trump hotels, he said, business has increased since 2017.

“Our teams are consistently recognized for providing exceptional service and we couldn’t be more proud of their hard work and dedication,” he wrote. “Year to date the portfolio as a whole is exceeding revenue and gross operating profit over last year considerably, as well as exceeding 2018 budget targets.”

The Trump Organization declined to give specifics about the hotels, or about the chain as a whole.

There are now 11 Trump-branded hotels worldwide. That number is smaller than it used to be: Since Inauguration Day 2017, the owners of Trump hotels in Toronto, Panama and New York’s SoHo neighborhood all cut ties with the Trump brand, and changed their hotels’ names. Marriott announced this week that it will take over the Panama property.

Among those remaining 11, some seem to be prospering: Trump’s hotel in Washington, D.C., is busy with conservative groups, foreign embassy parties and GOP fundraisers. At Trump’s hotel in Las Vegas, investors said their low rates have brought an influx of tourists from China.

But the news has been worse at the Trump hotels in New York and Chicago, according to people who have invested in them.

In these cities, Trump took on dozens or hundreds of small partners in an arrangement called a “condo-hotel.” That meant legally subdividing his hotels, so that each room could be sold as a separate piece of property.

For the room owners, the benefit was that they got a share of the income, and the right to stay in their rooms for some nights. They also got details about income and occupancy rates for their rooms and — in some cases — for the hotel as a whole. In recent weeks, The Post spoke to 19 investors from the two hotels combined.

For Trump — whose risk-taking businesses had needed repeated cash infusions from his father, Fred Trump, as a New York Times article detailed this week — the hotel-condo arrangement gave him two things he needed.

One was cash. The other was a dilution of his financial risk. He got paid on the front end, by selling the units. Then he got paid on the back end, because he kept the contracts to operate the hotels.

“It’s a way to enjoy a revenue stream, sort of indefinitely, if you can control the management group,” said Jonathan J. Miller, a real-estate consultant who has studied condo-hotels. But, he said, that’s a big “if”: In many cases, he said, the investors who own rooms eventually take control, and kick out the original operator.

In New York — where Trump’s hotel opened at 1 Central Park West in 1997 — it worked for many years.

Celebrities visited often, liking the small, private lobby and sweeping park views. In 2012, for instance, a paparazzo caught Robert De Niro emerging with a laptop and papers in hand.

The hotel’s revenue from room rentals increased every year from 2011 to 2015, according to hotel-wide statistics shared with owners.

“2015 was a banner year for us,” Prince A. Sanders, the hotel’s general manager, wrote in a letter to room owners.

On the campaign trail, Trump bragged about this hotel, which had helped him reenter the world of big-time New York real estate after his debt-fueled crash in the early 1990s. He called it “a great success from the day it was built.”

Then came 2016.

Overnight, Trump had transformed his brand — from an icon of big-city success, he became an icon of smoldering resentment against big-city America.

In New York, his hotel was left to sell the old Trump, as this deep-blue city turned angrily on the new one.

“You come outside, you get yelled at. They have it gated off, there’s police there,” because of protests, said Finkelstein, one of the room owners. “If you’re going to stay in a hotel in New York, you figure out which one you’re going to stay at.” In 2017, Finkelstein said, he lost money on his unit for the first time after years — the room revenue didn’t cover the fees and taxes.

As Trump’s political star rose, the celebrities thinned out, owners say. Protests increased. Sometimes, the celebrities *led* the protests: De Niro, for instance, returned to the hotel to speak to a large anti-Trump rally outside last year.

“I don’t even like to use the umbrellas” with the name “Trump” on them, said Ngaere Macray, who owns a hotel unit in the building that she uses for part of the year. She doesn’t like Trump’s politics, but doesn’t want to sell her unit because she says the view is too good, the service is too nice. (The research firm CityRealty says the resale value of hotel-condo units has stayed stable, or even increased, despite the problems with revenue.)

Macray wants Trump to go instead. “He is the management group that we could, in theory, vote out.”

In the statements mailed to owners, good numbers turned south.

From 2015 to 2017, the hotel’s revenue from room rentals dropped from \$34.4 million to \$30.9 million. The average room rate — which had been high, even by New York’s inflated standards — fell from \$767 a night to \$710.

At the same time, other hotels nearby were also struggling as new competitors sprouted all over Midtown, cutting into everyone’s revenue. But the Trump hotel fared worse than the others, said industry analyst Michael J. Bellisario of Robert W. Baird and Co.

“That decline is probably somewhat election-related,” Bellisario said. “There’s no way of knowing for sure.”

At last, in early 2018, the Trump Organization told owners that it had identified the source of the problem.

It wasn’t the Trump brand.

It was the bathrooms.

“A major dissatisfier has been the detrition of our room product . . . especially our bathrooms, which are actually twenty years old,” Sanders, the general manager, wrote in the letter. Some were still outfitted with some 1990s-era Jacuzzi tubs. Sanders said a \$20 million renovation would update the hotel’s interior.

But the hotel’s board also was considering a more radical change.

At a special meeting in January — the minutes of which were obtained by The Post — the board pondered whether it had the legal right to change the building’s name (some owners wanted to call the hotel simply “One Central Park

At last count, the hotel said, Saudi-based customers had booked 218 nights at Trump Chicago this year — a 169 percent increase from the same period in 2016. It also told investors about a rise in customers from China: “China’s room night production has increased significantly compared to 2016.” The Trump Organization did not respond to questions from The Post about these latest statistics on the Chicago hotel.

Roberts, the retired electrician, said he had invested in the hotel against his lawyer’s advice.

He had put down a \$64,000 deposit on the unit in 2004, before the hotel was built. Then, in 2008, Trump asked for the rest of the money.

“ ‘Lose your \$64,000, don’t do it,’ ” Roberts remembered his real estate lawyer saying. The lawyer worried that he was paying too much, as a financial crisis and a housing bust loomed. But Roberts went ahead: “I’m careful with money, so I didn’t want to lose my \$64,000.”

Now, he said, the pain of the hotel’s decreasing revenue has fallen disproportionately on him.

He said that, before Trump’s company passes along his room’s earnings, it takes out fees for maintenance, reservations, housekeeping and other services. When revenue decreased, Roberts said, Trump’s company took about the same cut — which left much less for him. “I paid for the difference,” he said.

As a result, Roberts said, his room’s payout dropped much faster than the hotel’s overall revenue: It fell from \$20,900 in 2015 to \$8,900 in 2017. But after he pays taxes and his mortgage, Roberts says, Trump’s unit gives him about \$7 a day.

“I owe more than I can sell it for,” he said. “I can’t catch up with the drop in price. I keep thinking that I’m ready to sell, and it drops again.” He has \$290,000 left on his mortgage.

Even as revenue ticked up this year, owners of Trump hotel rooms in Chicago have struggled to sell them: Seventeen units are on the market now, and many of them have been available for months.

“The market is still significantly below where it was when the building opened. It’s not a pretty picture for somebody who purchased then,” said Gail Lissner of Integra Realty Resource

In Chicago, there has been no sign of a revolt by the hotel’s ownership board. Edward Martin, a Wisconsin businessman who heads the board, responded to The Post’s queries with a short text message: “Trump Tower Chicago is the premier property in Chicago.” Soloway, the New Jersey doctor, is also on the board.

But this spring, the Trump Organization’s own real-estate brokers did something radical.

They removed the Trump name from the building.

At least, in the sales brochure.

“The perfect entertainment + dining destination,” said the brochure, which was first reported by Crain’s Chicago business. It was advertising some long-vacant retail space in the Trump building’s bottom floors.

In the photo under those words, the giant TRUMP sign on the building’s facade had been airbrushed away.

Krakov was a fellow at the Investigative Reporting Workshop at American University. Crystal Duan in Las Vegas and Jack Gillum and Alice Crites in Washington contributed to this report.

EXHIBIT 9

The Wooing of Jared Kushner: How the Saudis Got a Friend in the White House

By David D. Kirkpatrick, Ben Hubbard, Mark Landler and Mark Mazzetti

Dec. 8, 2018

Senior American officials were worried. Since the early months of the Trump administration, Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law and Middle East adviser, had been having private, informal conversations with Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the favorite son of Saudi Arabia's king.

Given Mr. Kushner's political inexperience, the private exchanges could make him susceptible to Saudi manipulation, said three former senior American officials. In an effort to tighten practices at the White House, a new chief of staff tried to reimpose longstanding procedures stipulating that National Security Council staff members should participate in all calls with foreign leaders.

But even with the restrictions in place, Mr. Kushner, 37, and Prince Mohammed, 33, kept chatting, according to three former White House officials and two others briefed by the Saudi royal court. In fact, they said, the two men were on a first-name basis, calling each other Jared and Mohammed in text messages and phone calls.

The exchanges continued even after the Oct. 2 killing of Jamal Khashoggi, the Saudi journalist who was ambushed and dismembered by Saudi agents, according to two former senior American officials and the two people briefed by the Saudis.

As the killing set off a firestorm around the world and American intelligence agencies concluded that it was ordered by Prince Mohammed, Mr. Kushner became the prince's most important defender inside the White House, people familiar with its internal deliberations say.

Mr. Kushner's support for Prince Mohammed in the moment of crisis is a striking demonstration of a singular bond that has helped draw President Trump into an embrace of Saudi Arabia as one of his most important international allies.

But the ties between Mr. Kushner and Prince Mohammed did not happen on their own. The prince and his advisers, eager to enlist American support for his hawkish policies in the region and for his own consolidation of power, cultivated the relationship with Mr. Kushner for more than two years, according to documents, emails and text messages reviewed by The New York Times.

A delegation of Saudis close to the prince visited the United States as early as the month Mr. Trump was elected, the documents show, and brought back a report identifying Mr. Kushner as a crucial focal point in the courtship of the new administration. He brought to the job scant knowledge about the region, a transactional mind-set and an intense focus on reaching a deal with the Palestinians that met Israel's demands, the delegation noted.

Even then, before the inauguration, the Saudis were trying to position themselves as essential allies who could help the Trump administration fulfill its campaign pledges. In addition to offering to help resolve the dispute between Israel and the Palestinians, the Saudis offered hundreds of billions of dollars in deals to buy American weapons and invest in American infrastructure. Mr. Trump later announced versions of some of these items with great fanfare when he made his first foreign trip: to an Arab-Islamic summit in Riyadh, the Saudi capital. The Saudis had extended that invitation during the delegation's November 2016 visit.

“The inner circle is predominantly deal makers who lack familiarity with political customs and deep institutions, and they support Jared Kushner,” the Saudi delegation wrote of the incoming administration in a slide presentation obtained by the Lebanese newspaper Al Akhbar, which provided it to The Times. Several Americans who spoke with the delegation confirmed the slide presentation’s accounts of the discussions.

The courtship of Mr. Kushner appears to have worked.

Only a few months after Mr. Trump moved into the White House, Mr. Kushner was inquiring about the Saudi royal succession process and whether the United States could influence it, raising fears among senior officials that he sought to help Prince Mohammed, who was not yet the crown prince, vault ahead in the line for the throne, two former senior White House officials said. American diplomats and intelligence officials feared that the Trump administration might be seen as playing favorites in the delicate internal politics of the Saudi royal family, the officials said.

(After publication, a senior White House official said in a statement: “Implications that Jared inquired about the possibility of influencing the Saudi royal succession process are false.”)

By March, Mr. Kushner helped usher Prince Mohammed into a formal lunch with Mr. Trump in a state dining room at the White House, capitalizing on a last minute cancellation by Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany because of a snowstorm.



In March 2017, Mr. Kushner helped usher the prince into a formal lunch with Mr. Trump at the White House. Stephen Crowley/The New York Times

Bending protocol, Mr. Kushner arranged for Prince Mohammed, often referred to by his initials as M.B.S., to receive the kind of treatment usually reserved for heads of state, with photographs and news media coverage, according to a person involved in the arrangements. It appears to have been the first face-to-face meeting between Mr. Kushner and the prince, but Mr. Kushner raised eyebrows by telling others in the White House that he and Prince Mohammed had already spoken several times before, two people at the event recalled.

In a statement, a White House spokesman said that “Jared has always meticulously followed protocols and guidelines regarding the relationship with MBS and all of the other foreign officials with whom he interacts.”

White House officials declined to explain those protocols and guidelines, and declined to comment on Mr. Kushner’s one-on-one communications with Prince Mohammed since the killing of Mr. Khashoggi.

Their connection, though, has been pivotal since the start of the Trump administration.

“The relationship between Jared Kushner and Mohammed bin Salman constitutes the foundation of the Trump policy not just toward Saudi Arabia but toward the region,” said Martin Indyk, a fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and a former Middle East envoy. The administration’s reliance on the Saudis in the peace process, its support for the kingdom’s feud with Qatar, an American ally, and its backing of the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen, he said, all grew out of “that bromance.”

‘You Will Love Him’

Before the 2016 presidential race, Mr. Kushner’s most extensive exposure to the Middle East was through Israel. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was a Kushner family friend, and the Kushners had contributed heavily to Israeli nonprofits supporting Jewish settlements in the Palestinian territories of the West Bank.

But the Arab rulers of the oil-rich Persian Gulf mainly figured in Mr. Kushner’s life as investors in American real estate, the Kushner family business.

So Tom Barrack, a Lebanese-American real estate investor with close ties to both Mr. Trump and the Gulf rulers, set out during the campaign to introduce Mr. Kushner to his associates as a useful ally.

“You will love him and he agrees with our agenda!” Mr. Barrack wrote in May 2016 in an email to the Emirati ambassador in Washington, Youssef Otaiba.



Tom Barrack, a Lebanese-American real estate investor with close ties to both Mr. Trump and the Gulf rulers. Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images

Mr. Otaiba soon positioned himself as an informal adviser on the region to Mr. Kushner.

“Thanks to you, I am in constant contact with Jared and that has been extremely helpful,” Mr. Otaiba wrote to Mr. Barrack in the first months after Mr. Trump took office.

The Emirati ambassador was also eagerly promoting Prince Mohammed. Since the prince’s aging father had taken the throne in 2015, the Emiratis were betting heavily on the prince as their preferred contender in the succession struggles within the Saudi royal family.

“MBS is incredibly impressive,” Mr. Otaiba wrote Mr. Barrack in June 2016, as they tried to arrange meetings between the prince and the Trump campaign.

The month after the American election, the de facto ruler of the United Arab Emirates — Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed of Abu Dhabi — delivered a similar message when he made an unannounced trip to New York for a meeting with Mr. Kushner and others about the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

While speaking with Mr. Kushner, the Emirati prince also recommended Prince Mohammed of Saudi Arabia as a promising young leader, according to a person familiar with their conversations.

Mr. Kushner seemed impressed. The meeting had been arranged in part by Rick Gerson, a hedge fund manager who was close to Mr. Kushner and to the Emirati crown prince. After the encounter, Mr. Gerson sent a message to the Emirati crown prince about his success in winning over Mr. Kushner.

“I promise you this will be the start of a special and historic relationship,” Mr. Gerson wrote, in a text message.

On the eve of the inauguration, Mr. Gerson wrote to the Emirati crown prince again.

“You have a true friend in the White House,” Mr. Gerson wrote, recounting a visit with Mr. Kushner before Mr. Kushner departed for Washington.

The emails with Ambassador Otaiba and the text messages with Mr. Gerson were provided to The Times by people critical of Emirati foreign policies and authenticated by others with direct knowledge of their contents. Mr. Gerson declined to comment and the Emirati embassy did not respond to requests for comment.

‘Lack of Familiarity’ With History

Top aides to Saudi Arabia’s Prince Mohammed also met with Mr. Kushner on a trip to New York in November 2016, after the election.

The Saudi team included Musaad al-Aiban, a cabinet minister involved in economic planning and national security, and Khaled al-Falih, installed by the prince as minister of energy and chairman of the state oil company, according to executives who met with them and a person who was briefed on the meetings. Mr. Aiban did not respond to a request for comment, and Mr. Falih could not be reached for comment.

The delegation made special note of what it characterized as Mr. Kushner’s ignorance of Saudi Arabia.



Khaled al-Falih was part of a team of top aides to the prince who met with Mr. Kushner in New York in November 2016. Tasneem Alsultan for The New York Times

“Kushner made clear his lack of familiarity with the history of Saudi-American relations and he asked about its support for terrorism,” the team noted in the slide presentation prepared for Riyadh. “After the discussion, he expressed his satisfaction with what was explained about the Saudi role in fighting terrorism” and what the Saudis said was their international leadership in fighting Islamist extremism.

Mr. Kushner, the Saudi report said, also questioned the delegation’s motives, asking whether the group had always been interested in working with Mr. Trump. As a candidate, Mr. Trump had promised to ban Muslim immigrants from entering the United States and had singled out Saudi Arabia as a dangerous influence.

“Kushner wondered about Saudi Arabia’s desire for partnership and whether it came from opportunity or worry, and he wondered as well if it was specific to this American administration or whether it was presented to Hillary Clinton (for example: women driving),” read another slide, next to a photograph of Mr. Kushner.

But Mr. Kushner was clear about his own priorities, the report said. “The Israeli-Palestinian conflict was among the most important issues to draw Kushner’s attention,” the delegation reported, and therefore the best way to win him over.

“The Palestinian issue first: there is still no clear plan for the American administration toward the Middle East,” the delegation wrote, “except that the central interest is finding a historic solution to support the stability of Israel and solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”

To cultivate ties with the Trump team, the Saudis had prepared a long list of initiatives that they said would help Mr. Trump deliver for his supporters.

Seizing on Mr. Trump’s campaign vows for the “extreme vetting” of immigrants, the Saudi delegation proposed “establishing an intelligence and data” exchange “to help the American administration carry out its strategy of investigating those requesting residency (extreme vetting),” according to an Arabic version of a presentation for the Trump team.

And the delegation pledged “high-level coordination with the new American administration” to help with “defeating extremist thought.”

Several of the Saudi proposals were evidently welcomed.

One was a “joint center to fight the ideology of extremism and terrorism.” President Trump helped inaugurate a Saudi version of the center on his trip to Riyadh the following May.

Another Saudi proposal outlined what the Trump administration later called “an Arab NATO.” In their presentation, the Saudis described it as an Islamic military coalition of tens of thousands of troops “ready when the president-elect wishes to deploy them.”

Other initiatives appeared timed to Mr. Trump’s first term in office, like proposals to spend \$50 billion over four years on American defense contracts, to increase Saudi investment in the United States to \$200 billion over four years, and to invest, with other Gulf states, up to \$100 billion in American infrastructure.

And the delegation urged Mr. Trump to come to Saudi Arabia himself to “launch the initiatives as part of a historic welcome celebration.”

It is unclear how the delegation’s slide-show presentation to and about the Trump team were obtained by the Al Akhbar newspaper, which is sympathetic to the Iranian-backed Lebanese movement Hezbollah and Iran, an enemy of Saudi Arabia.

Several Americans identified in the presentation acknowledged meeting with the delegation and confirmed broad outlines of the discussions. The Times provided the documents and the names of delegation members to an official of the Saudi Embassy in Washington, who declined to comment.

A Saudi Role in Mideast Peace

Israel had long argued to American diplomats that Saudi Arabia's influence in the region made it essential to any peace deal, and the Israelis were developing high hopes for Prince Mohammed because of his hawkish views toward Iran and his general iconoclasm (he would later make several statements, like affirming the Israeli "right" to land, that were notably more sympathetic to the Israeli position than those of other Saudi leaders.)

Within weeks of Mr. Trump's move into the White House, Mr. Kushner had embraced the delegation's proposal for the president to visit Riyadh, convinced by then that the alliance with Saudi Arabia would be crucial in his plans for the region, according to a person who discussed it with Mr. Kushner and a second person familiar with his plans.

The secretary of state at the time, Rex W. Tillerson, opposed the idea. It would link the administration too closely to Riyadh, these people said, giving up flexibility and leverage. Mr. Trump initially saw little benefit either, according to a person involved in his deliberations.



Images of President Trump and King Salman were projected onto the Ritz Hotel in Riyadh during Mr. Trump's visit last year. Stephen Crowley/The New York Times

But by the time of the inauguration Mr. Kushner was already arguing that under the influence of Prince Mohammed, Saudi Arabia could play a pivotal role in advancing a Middle East peace deal, according to three people familiar with his thinking. That would be the president's legacy, Mr. Kushner argued, according to a person involved in the discussions.

It was around the time of the White House visit in March 2017 that senior officials in the State Department and the Pentagon began to worry about the one-on-one communications between Prince Mohammed — who is known to favor the online messaging service WhatsApp — and Mr. Kushner. "There was a risk the Saudis were playing him," one former White House official said, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

Two later face-to-face encounters with Mr. Kushner preceded key turning points in Prince Mohammed's consolidation of power.

Shortly after Mr. Kushner visited Riyadh with the president in May 2017, Prince Mohammed orchestrated the ouster of his older cousin, Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, removing him from control of the Saudi Interior Ministry and replacing him as crown prince. Prince Mohammed also announced a Saudi-led blockade of its neighbor and rival Qatar, the host of a major American air base.

And days after Mr. Kushner made an unannounced visit to Riyadh in the fall of 2017, the crown prince summarily detained about 200 wealthy Saudis, including several of his royal cousins, in a Ritz-Carlton hotel in Riyadh.

After each play for power, President Trump publicly praised Prince Mohammed.



Protesting the killing of Jamal Khashoggi, the Saudi writer, in Istanbul last month. Emrah Gurel/Associated Press

One former White House official argued that Mr. Kushner's personal ties to Prince Mohammed had sometimes been an asset. At one point, for example, the Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen had blocked a critical port, cutting off humanitarian and medical supplies. The national security adviser at the time, Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster, suggested that Mr. Kushner call Prince Mohammed to address the issue, the official said, and General McMaster believed Mr. Kushner's intercession had helped persuade the Saudis to loosen the restrictions.

White House officials also say that Mr. Kushner has formal conversations with many other leaders in the region. And previous administrations have also had close ties to the Saudi government.

Since the uproar over Mr. Khashoggi's killing, the Trump administration has acknowledged only one conversation between Mr. Kushner and Prince Mohammed: an Oct. 10 telephone call joined by John R. Bolton, the national security adviser. The Americans "asked for more details and for the Saudi government to be transparent in the investigation process," the White House said in a statement.

But American officials and a Saudi briefed on their conversations said that Mr. Kushner and Prince Mohammed have continued to chat informally. According to the Saudi, Mr. Kushner has offered the crown prince advice about how to weather the storm, urging him to resolve his conflicts around the region and avoid further embarrassments.

Few of the Saudi promises have amounted to much. The effectiveness of the counterterrorism center in Riyadh remains doubtful. After offering \$50 billion in new weapons contracts, the Saudis have signed only letters of interest or intent without any firm deals. After proposing to marshal up to \$100 billion in investments in American infrastructure, the Saudis have announced an investment of only \$20 billion.

Inside the White House, Mr. Kushner has continued to argue that the president needs to stand by Prince Mohammed because he remains essential to the administration's broader Middle East strategy, according to people familiar with the deliberations.

Whether Prince Mohammed can fulfill that role, however, remains to be seen. His initial approaches to the Palestinians were rejected by their leaders, and their resistance stiffened after the Trump administration recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital without waiting for a negotiated agreement on the city's status.

Now the prince's father, King Salman, 82, who is still the official head of state, has appeared to resist Mr. Kushner's Middle East peace plans as well.

"The Palestinian issue will remain our primary issue," the king declared in a speech last month, "until the Palestinian people receive all of their legal rights."

Correction: Dec. 8, 2018

An earlier version of this article incorrectly stated when Prince Mohammed bin Salman ousted his cousin, Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, as crown prince of Saudi Arabia. It was in June 2017, not April 2017.

David D. Kirkpatrick reported from London; Ben Hubbard from Beirut; and Mark Landler and Mark Mazzetti from Washington. Ronen Bergman contributed reporting from Tel Aviv, and Karam Shoumali from Berlin.

A version of this article appears in print on , Section A, Page 1 of the New York edition with the headline: Wooed by Saudis, Kushner Became Influential Friend